



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senator Jerry Petrowski Column: A Productive First Session in the State Senate

This week Governor Walker signed the last of the fifty-six bills I authored and passed this session, which brought a very busy first term to a close in the State Senate. It has truly been an honor to serve in a broader role and work with constituents from Marshfield to Hatley, and all the way up to Hayward.

Although I worked on a wide array of important issues this session, the bills I felt strongest about were the bipartisan public safety measures. These bills made a variety of improvements to our state laws related to human trafficking, domestic abuse, roadway safety and medical screening of newborn babies prior to their release from the hospital. The testimony we heard from domestic abuse survivors and from parents of children that had chronic health conditions that were missed under the current system of screenings was incredibly compelling. For me, it was personally gratifying to see these bills move through the legislative process with broad support.

I was also pleased to help lower the tax burden in the state while simultaneously providing additional resources to our schools and local governments. We have provided significant relief to taxpayers whereby an average family of four will see a reduction in property and income taxes of over \$500 this year. At the same time, we provided an annual \$150 increase per pupil for schools throughout the state, targeted aid for Northwoods schools, and increased transportation and transit funding for local governments. I am hopeful that our economy will continue to improve and that we can build on these efforts to put us on a stronger economic footing going forward.

My experience this session was contrary to the perceived trend of intensified partisan attitudes and poor conduct in the legislature. I share some of the frustration expressed by several retiring colleagues from both sides of the aisle, with the tone and nature of debates in Madison, but I am not deterred by it. Throughout my career as a previous member of the Assembly, which included time in the minority, I always found that if you are genuinely willing to listen and work with people you can discover common ground.

We cannot expect to find agreement on everything; you probably don't agree about everything with the people at your dinner table. Our most important, collective goal is to help support a path towards the best possible future for our state and citizens; to achieve this, we must avoid becoming so preoccupied with our disagreements that finding common ground becomes an afterthought.

This is an approach I have taken and have experienced great success implementing it. Of the fifty-six bills I authored and passed this session, all but four passed both houses of the legislature with unanimous support from both parties or on voice votes. Even the four aforementioned bills that were the most complex and controversial, such as the "implements of husbandry" bill, received broad bipartisan support in the end.

I am optimistic about our future as a state and as a nation and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve as your State Senator. While we have made great strides these past two years, there is still so much to do. I look forward to working with you again next session to make our state an even better place to live, work, raise a family, and retire.

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